

# SPEECH

OF

HON. WALTER BOOTH, OF CONNECTICUT,

IN THE

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

JUNE 4, 1850.

*In Committee of the Whole on the state of the Union, on the President's Message transmitting the Constitution of California.*

Mr. BOOTH said:

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Custom often makes law; and, though such laws are not always of the most binding character, the custom of members of this House to express their views on the great question which now agitates the country is so general, that an omission on my part to do so might create surprise, and would place me in the attitude of being singular. This impression, and the hope of explaining to my constituents the votes I expect to give, induce me, against my former inclination, to express my opinion; not expecting, however, to shed light on a subject which has been so long and so ably discussed in this House.

What, Mr. Chairman, what is the subject so deeply interesting to the country at this time? It is the admission of a new State into this Union: a great subject, I admit; and were we now called upon, for the first time, to add a new sister to the family, there would be some novelty in the transaction. But it seems to me, that after having received some seventeen like sisters into the family, and more than doubling the original number, with so many precedents, there need be no great difficulty in bringing the proposed one to the altar, and performing the nuptial tie. What hinders? She has on her bridal attire; she has, for aught I can see, performed all the stipulations for the occasion that have been required of her elder sisters who have been welcomed to our embrace.

But, Mr. Chairman, what hinders the last binding ceremony to bring this new State into that alliance she so much desires, and which, I doubt not, the country equally desires? Is it the distance of her location from the rest of the family? Not at all. The country has been conquered and purchased for the very purpose of peopling it with our sons and our daughters, large numbers of whom have gone there and taken possession of the land. Besides, we have long had possessions on her northern borders, but were lonely in that distant region, and we are now provided neighbors for them.

Is it that she has not a population sufficient to form a respectable State? This objection is

faintly urged against her by some, but any such objection must vanish before the great fact, that no new country on this continent was ever peopled with such rapidity as this very country; and the tide of emigration thither is flowing in such rapid currents, as to give assurance that her present growth is, and that her future growth will be, without a precedent in this or in any other country.

Is it because her inhabitants are not sufficiently enlightened for self-government? Look at the Constitution she has formed, and I fear not to affirm, that no gentleman will hazard his reputation so much as to bring this objection against her. Is it because she has been provided by the former action of Congress with all that legislation and protection a new country needs, or will require for years to come? This cannot be pleaded against her; she has been left, almost, without a shadow of protection. Is it because her boundaries are too large? This has been urged by a few; but, after the account given of the face of the country and the condition of her harbors by the honorable gentleman from Oregon, I do not understand and cannot believe it to be an objection, with any considerable number of gentlemen in this House. It would be a strange spectacle, indeed, to see gentlemen strangle at California, who could swallow the empire or Republic of Texas without inconvenience. Is it because an undue influence has been exercised by the Administration in the formation of her organic law, her Constitution? Whatever may have been thought on this subject in the early part of the session, that objection has been dispelled. We have evidence, conclusive to my mind, that the formation of her Constitution is the spontaneous result of her own will and choice, and if any form of government ever manifested the wisdom and reflection of sound, unbiassed minds, we have the evidence in her Constitution and form of government, now officially placed before us. What, then, Mr. Chairman, is the cause of delay? What cause for jealousy exists, that we should say to this sister, now knocking at our door, "You must not come into our sanctuary?"

Is it anything she has done? No, sir, no. She has done her part well; she comes, with clean hands and open and honest heart, to perform her duties; why shall she not be admitted? I repeat the question, why?

Sir, I dislike to call to mind the *real* reason that I think exists and causes this delay: because, in my opinion, this reason ought not to shut her out a moment. But, Mr. Chairman, we must look at things as they are. In the late treaty with Mexico we obtained a large territory, and it was, doubtless, the expectation of the Southern portion of these States, that slavery would be extended over a part, if not over the whole of it; that the area of this institution would thereby be enlarged, and not only a new field opened for this species of labor, but a new market, also, for slaves. But California has prohibited slavery in her Constitution, and thus cut off the hope of ever introducing it into that portion of the country. Is not *this*, Mr. Chairman, the reason, the real reason, and the only substantial one, (if this may be called so,) why this bill is so much embarrassed in this House? And now, sir, if I have judged correctly, I desire to examine what there is in the institution of slavery that should make it so potent to prevent, in this case, what I believe to be the will of a large majority on this floor.

Sir, what is slavery? What are its characteristics? what its strong claims for extension? Is it of such high and holy origin—so full of mercy and good fruits? Does it promote the best good of the country, and create that state of society best calculated to insure its peace and harmony, and shed honor on the American name and character? Will it stand the test of any of these considerations? Does humanity, does religion, does love of man, or love of country, or any wise consideration, press us to make efforts to extend it? Or do not all these considerations combine to make it our duty to restrict it to the smallest limits in our power?

But, to proceed, What is slavery? I understand slavery to be a state of entire subjection of one person to the will of another. One is the master, owning and controlling the person and services of the other; and this, not only during the minority of the slave, but for life. The slave is never to hope to arrive at freedom. From that hope he is forever cut off under the system. Nothing but exceptions to the general rule ever bring freedom to the slave; and these are so few as to shut him up in despair for life. He cannot own himself—he cannot control the fruits of his labor. If he form the marriage relation, and if, in that condition, he be surrounded with children, all these holy and Heaven-confirmed relations of life are liable to be broken up; the husband and wife may be separated and sent to different and distant parts of the country; their children may be sent—I will not say, thank God! to the four winds of heaven—but they may be sent to the four winds of slavery dominions in this country—and shall we enlarge these dominions, that they may be scattered more distantly and more hopelessly from each other?

But, further: Is slavery of such high and holy

origin as to justify us in extending it in this free country? We read, in the first chapter of Genesis, 26th and 27th verses, that "God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth."

"So God created man in his own image; in the image of God created he him," &c.

Here man was constituted lord of the world he was to inhabit, and over the animals made to fill it. He was created "in the image of God." Does this contemplate that tyranny implied in the system of slavery? Would any man, not accustomed to the system from habit, even infer that, as the race should increase, one portion of them should be subjected, like cattle, to another portion of the same family? But, it is said, the Bible sanctions slavery; that Abraham, and other good men among the patriarchs, had their servants; and that the writers of the New Testament did not condemn the system then existing in the country where they labored and wrote. I hope not to be tedious on this point, and would rather leave it to those whose profession it is to explain the holy Book; but I have my opinion, and fear not to express it.

Abraham, and other good men, had their servants; granted. This House has its servants; but did it ever occur to us, that those who keep our records, or stand at our doors, or take care of our documents, our letters and papers, are disgraced by such service? Do we see these men trying to get away from their service? Do those who take care of our public grounds, sweep and clean our halls and pavements, make our fires, and perform such other duties as belong to their vocation, consider it a hard bondage? Such, Mr. Chairman, were, in my opinion, the general features of the service performed by the servants of Abraham and other good men in that period. But let us look a little into the history of Abraham's servants. In the 24th chapter of Genesis, we have an account of Abraham's sending his servants from the land of Canaan, where he dwelt, to Mesopotamia, the land of his kindred, to obtain a wife for his son Isaac. This was an important mission. We read, in the 21 verse of this chapter, that "Abraham said unto the eldest servant of his house, that ruled over all that he had, Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh, and I will make thee swear," &c. Mark the expression here recorded of this servant, "that ruled over all that he had." He made this servant swear, by the Lord, the God of Heaven and the God of the earth, that he would perform the trust according to the charge he gave him—that he would not take a wife for his son of the Canaanites, among whom he dwelt, but would go to the land of his kindred for that purpose. If I am correctly informed, the oath of Southern slaves is not much regarded at this day. The oath is administered, the charge given, and we read in the 10th verse, "And the servant took ten camels of the camels of his master, and departed." Now mark the expression again, ("for all the goods of his master were in his hands," &c. and he arose and went to Mesopotamia," &c.

And what more was he intrusted with? He had jewels of silver and jewels of gold; he had bracelets and earrings, and raiment, and precious things—to give to the damsel and her friends. This, sir, is no small outfit, a mission of no little importance. There were other men with him, probably other fellow-servants. I have sometimes thought that some patriotic Americans, even those of real Anglo-Saxon lineage, who come up here for office, would be tempted to take such a mission as this.

Sir, if I mistake not, reference has more than once been made in this House to the fact, that the angel of the Lord finding Hagar, Sarai's maid, after she had fled from her mistress, directed her to return to her mistress and submit herself under her hand. This is all true, and recorded in Holy Writ—Genesis, 16th chapter; but, is this all the history of this servant Hagar? This is stated in support of slavery. But, sir, we ought to tell the whole truth, and state all the facts, and then see how the case appears, and pass our judgment accordingly. Lest I should state incorrectly, I will read the record itself.

[Here the Clerk, at the request of Mr. Booth, read the 16th chapter of Genesis, as follows:

#### CHAP. XVI.

1. Now Sarai, Abram's wife, bare him no children: and she had a handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar.
2. And Sarai said unto Abram, Behold now, the Lord hath restrained me from bearing: I pray thee, go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her. And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai.
3. And Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar her maid, the Egyptian, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife.
4. And he went in unto Hagar, and she conceived; and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her eyes.
5. And Sarai said unto Abram, My wrong be upon thee: I have given my maid into thy bosom; and when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her eyes: the Lord judge between me and thee.
6. But Abram said unto Sarai, Behold, thy maid is in thy hand: do to her as it pleaseth thee. And when Sarai dealt hardly with her, she fled from her face.
7. And the angel of the Lord found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness, by the fountain in the way to Shur.
8. And he said, Hagar, Sarai's maid, whence comest thou? and whither wilt thou go? And she said, I flee from the face of my mistress Sarai.
9. And the angel of the Lord said unto her, Return to thy mistress, and submit thyself under her hands.
10. And the angel of the Lord said unto her, I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude.
11. And the angel of the Lord said unto her, Behold, thou art with child, and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael; because the Lord hath heard thy affliction.
12. And he will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him: and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren.
13. And she called the name of the Lord that spake unto her. Thou God seest me: for she said, Have I also here concealed after him that seeth me?
14. Wherefore the well was called Beer is-hai-roi: behold, this between Kadesh and Bered.
15. And Hagar bare Abram a son; and Abram called his son's name, which Hagar bare, Ishmael.
16. And Abram was fourscore and six years old when Hagar bare Ishmael to Abram.]

Whatever may have been the servitude of Hagar, it is certain that her posterity were not to be slaves, and their history proves the fact.

Sir, here are circumstances connected with the habits of that age, that our Southern friends would be unwilling to admit, as peculiar to their

institution. We should offend them by pressing all this example upon them. There were, doubtless, good reasons why the angel of the Lord directed Hagar to return. Sarai had given her to her husband to be his wife, and Abraham had taken her to his bosom; and, after her return, she bore Abraham a son, even Ishmael. Under all these circumstances, Hagar was directed to return to her mistress; her condition required that care and attention she could not find in the wilderness, and, doubtless, in mercy she was directed to return.

But, sir, this is not all the history given of this servant Hagar. In the 21st chapter of Genesis we have a further account of her. Time will not permit me to state the whole; suffice it to say, that Sarai desired this bondswoman and her son cast out, and Abraham fitted her out; (he did not sell her;) he fitted her out with bread and water, putting them and her child on her shoulder, and she departed. And now, again, the angel of God called to her out of heaven, and bid her fear not; and God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water; she was sustained, and there the lad Ishmael grew up. The full history you may find recorded by Moses.

Now, Mr. Chairman, does this compare, or have we any reason to suppose that the service rendered to Abraham and other good men, at that period, would compare with American slavery, where droves of slaves are gathered and collected in pens, as cattle are collected by a drover, and when the purchaser makes up his number, drives or ships them to a distant market, like the drover of cattle? What, think you, would Abraham say, if he could now speak, on being compared with those who justify slavery in these forms, and hold slaves to the bondage they suffer in this Union? Would he not say, as in another instance, "Son, remember,"—but I forbear to put words into the mouth of that sainted spirit; let the imagination complete the rebuke.

But, it is said that the writers of the New Testament did not condemn slavery, although it existed at the time they wrote, in its most horrid form. True, they did not single out that, as a crime in particular; the people were degraded and wicked, and the great effort of these teachers, in those days, was to effect a thorough and radical reform, and they taught those great general principles, which would, when embraced, uproot that with the other evil practices of the country. Their labors, examples, and teachings, were to go down to all time, to exhibit those holy principles which would cure not only the evil and sin of slavery, but all those evils, resulting from the wickedness of man, which should afflict the world in all future ages.

It is said, further, that the New Testament teaches the subjection and obedience of servants to their masters. Suppose, sir, that any gentleman, or all the gentlemen composing this House, had been captured, and put into a state of bondage, hopeless bondage, under severe task-masters, and that we had long been in that condition; that our oppressors had all civil power over us; and, suppose teachers of religion should come to the country of our oppression to reform the whole people,

how do you think a wise man would address us under such circumstances?—for ministers of religion are required to be “wise as serpents and harmless as doves.” They would advise us, as Christians, to be submissive, and exhibit a Christian character, on the great principle of our Saviour, to render good for evil, and blessing for cursing. This is in accordance with Christianity, to overcome evil with good; this is Christian teaching, but no justification of slavery.

Or, suppose a man to be wrongfully condemned to death; he must abide the sentence, there is no escape for him: what would a Christian teacher tell him? To curse and condemn the court that sentenced him? By no means. He would tell him to put his trust in God, and submit to the doom that awaited him. Christianity teaches submission to the civil Government, but this is no justification for an unjust judge.

But, it may be and it often is said, why not follow the example of the writers of the New Testament, and let slavery alone, and allow it to take its own course, and go where nature and interest will carry it? If this objection is lurking in any mind in this Hall, I need only reply to such an interrogatory, that the teachers whose precepts are recorded in the New Testament were men without civil power; they taught the precepts of a holy religion, using no carnal weapons. Nay, sir, their boldness in rebuking the wickedness of that age, brought most of them to the block under the civil power.

But, Mr. Chairman, we stand before the country and before the world as legislators, and, as such, clothed with power, under the Constitution, to frame all such laws as the general good requires. We have a right to receive new States into the Union; we have the right, and it is our duty, to make Territorial Governments, when needed, under such forms as shall best promote the good of the people. Our duties are legislative, and the example of the writers of the New Testament, to let slavery alone, (if indeed they did so, which is not clear in all cases,) is not, in that respect, an example for us. I hold it most clearly to be our duty, by legal enactment, to prevent the extension of an evil that casts so dark a shade over our fair Republic, and proves so often a source of bitter contention between different sections of our country.

Sir, does slavery stand justified on the plea of humanity, and does it work for the good of the slave? It has been urged that the slaves in this country are much improved in civilization and Christianity by being brought here, and therefore the cause of humanity requires or justifies this bondage. Let us examine this argument. It would be strange if we could not find in dark and benighted Africa, where civilization has been for ages nearly or quite blotted out, a worse and more cruel state of society than in such a land as this. Did the framers of the Constitution consider that a work of humanity which they *prohibited* after 1808? and did the framers of our laws, making the slave trade with Africa *piracy*, consider they were making war on the principles of humanity? Can we justify ourselves by perpetuating and extending human bondage and slavery amid the

noonday light that shines around us, because there is a worse barbarity in Africa, or in some other dark spot on the face of the earth? Can we consistently unfurl our banner of freedom, and blush to be told that one-sixth part of the people of the country in which it waves are not protected by its spreading folds, but are in hopeless bondage, and that their children are to follow after them, in all generations, in the same condition? Is *this* the humanity that should characterize such a nation as this? Is *this* the good we should leave for an inheritance to those who are to follow after us? Nay, rather let us inscribe on our banner Let freedom reign forever where it now reigns, and let those who have control over slavery in the States where it now exists, have all the fruit of the system to themselves alone.

Again, Mr. Chairman: Does slavery promote the good of the country? Are those States which slavery has existed from the formation of the Government, in a better condition than they would have been without that institution? or, than that that set immediately about the abolition of it? those States that have grown up free from slavery, Take Virginia, a State that, in our early history stood so high among her sisters, whose counsels were listened to with veneration, and that might be expected, from her soil and climate, and the big character of her citizens, to rise in all that makes a great and prosperous people. Had she let go her slavery, like Pennsylvania and New York, I doubt not she would have kept pace with any of her sisters, and perhaps would have outstripped them. I say nothing against her now; but have her cities, her towns, and the face of her State throughout kept pace with her free sisters? Do her villages dotting her whole State, spring up like those of New York, Ohio, or Pennsylvania? She has a good climate, she *had* a good soil, she had an early settlement; but, sir, has not her system of slavery been, to a great extent, the means of exhausting her soil and retarding her progress? Can you assign, sir, any cause more potent in producing these results than this? One example is sufficient for all.

Further, Mr. Chairman: Does slavery create the best state of society? We are, to a great extent, creatures of habit, and this fact explains to me the reason why some gentlemen say that the relation of master and slave tends to elevate the people. I suppose the practical operation of the matter is this: The master does very little, any, labor, and after the general oversight of his affairs, having a large portion of his time for intellectual improvement, rises in the scale of intelligence; while the slave, laboring constantly, and having no means of education, sinks to the lowest state of degradation that is possible with the light of intellectual example before him. If common report is true, the slave, in some of the States, is forbidden any access to the elementary means of learning, and penalties are even handed over those who would teach them to read. Now I can readily conceive, that these two systems will create the widest possible distinction between the master and slave; the master grows in intellect, if he improves his time for that purpose; the slave, inured to hardship, becomes strong to

the burdens imposed upon him, but has no intellect, or rather education, except such as he gathers from what he sees and hears. And I doubt not that house and family slaves often become quite intelligent in their narrow sphere of action. The plantation slaves have far less of these latter advantages, and these constitute the great mass. Here, sir, we have the two extremes; the master, intelligent, with the chief sources of information in his hands; the slave, shut out from all the general sources of knowledge and information, and doomed to labor on till he dies.

Now, sir, I have named the master and the slave, the two extremes in the slave States; but, do these constitute a majority? I mean, do the masters or owners of slaves constitute a majority of the people in the slaveholding States? When the next census is completed, I hope we shall know the relative proportion that the masters or slave-owners bear to the people of the slave States; but I will assume, what I suppose to be the fact, that slave-owners or masters, in that sense of the word, are in a minority, and largely so, in the slaveholding States. If this is true, what is the effect of slavery on the intermediate class of citizens?

I can conceive of the splendor of a noble-hearted and rich master; he can move in a sphere to gratify his ambition; he can exercise a great and perhaps controlling influence around him; he can perform acts of kindness and courtesy towards his poor neighbors; but what are the general feelings of those who cannot imitate him! Is there no envy, no jealousy, no inward complaining? Is there no mortification? Are not this class of people more unhappy in a slaveholding country than in any other? I know well that great distinctions exist in the free States, but I think they are much greater in the slave States; and, as the condition of this class renders it necessary for them to labor, do they not feel that they are, to a certain extent, associated with slaves, and can they look around them with the same complacency that they could in the free States? May I not, with emphasis, ask again, does slavery create the best state of society?

But, Mr. Chairman, does slavery promote the peace and harmony of the country?

I know, sir, if the moral and patriotic sentiments of the country shall slumber, and give to slavery all those measures which seem to promote that interest, and especially, if the free States will not question the institution or the virtues of it; if they will suppress every outbreak of feeling on the subject among themselves, and help the slave States, if need be, to suppress any such outbreak in their own States; in fact, if they will muzzle their press and their patriotic sons on this subject, it would seem that we might have tolerably peaceable times. But, on reflection, it looks to me as though there might be doubt even then, unless we take Pharaoh's plan, or some other, to get rid of our infants; for even our growth in numbers appears to be an aggression too intolerable to bear, and a constitutional provision is already whispered, in some quarters, to cut down the influence of members. What can be done, what *must* be done, to secure to slavery forever an equal influence with freedom? Sir, must it be so that any institution, however mighty

and potent in its influence, shall overshadow this Government and control its measures? Shall any institution ever be suffered to extend until it shall say to this Government, I am your master? True patriots became alarmed at the influence of the United States Bank; the iron arm of a Jackson gave that institution its death blow, and the true Democracy are, in my opinion, now called upon to awake and set bounds to slavery. If those who enjoy it in the States regard it as a good, let them have it, to their heart's content, but let territory now free remain so forever.

Mr. Chairman, let me ask again, does slavery shed honor on the American name and character?

What is the growing sentiment of the age in which we live? What are many of the nations of the Old World doing on this subject? Ah! I apprehend, sir, it is the pressure of this sentiment that deeply affects the slaveholder. Every man feels justified in his course by the example of others, to a certain extent; but who does not know that the spirit of freedom is the spirit of this age, and while this sentiment is bursting from heart to heart, and spreading from city to city, and from country to country, can we protect ourselves from its influence? Nay, sir, ought we not rather to cherish this sentiment—to kindle in our hearts and country a light that shall do honor to all our professions, as being the land, not only of the brave, but the land of freedom! Were we now to enlarge the area of slavery, and pave the way to take slaves to territory now free, how will the history read fifty years hence? Sir, how will it read twenty or ten years hence, when the public mind shall have conformed to the spirit of the age? Sir, we are forewarned by our national honor and reputation to stop the progress of slavery. As we would save our own character in the eyes of our children, before an enlightened country, and before the Christian world, let us beware how we tarnish the honor and glory of our country, by extending this evil.

But, sir, I have one consideration more. What claim has slavery for extension under the Constitution?

In the first article and second section it is said:

"Representatives and direct taxes shall be apportioned among the several States which may be included within this Union, according to their respective numbers, which shall be determined by adding to the whole number of free persons, including those bound to service for a term of years, and excluding Indians not taxed, three-fifths of all other persons."

Mr. Chairman, need I stop to argue that there is nothing in this provision of the Constitution that authorizes or contemplates the extension of slavery? Representatives and direct taxes shall be apportioned, according to the rule here laid down, by adding three-fifths of all other persons, besides those before enumerated. The framers of this article call these last, *persons*; they do not, as the custom now is, call them *slaves*. I doubt not, they expected that these persons or their descendants would, before this time, all be freed, as they have been in several of the States. They provided for an exigency that existed, to give a partial representation of those "other persons," and under this rule nearly twenty honorable gen-

plemen hold their seats on this floor—in my opinion, a much larger number than the framers of the Constitution ever expected. I cannot see the plausibility of any argument to justify the extension of slavery by this provision.

In the ninth section of this first article of the Constitution, it is said: "The migration or importation of such persons as any of the States now existing shall think proper to admit, shall not be prohibited by Congress prior to the year 1808." Slaves were then imported from Africa, and, doubtless, this method was considered the principal one, of obtaining this kind of labor. The States desiring to pursue this traffic were guaranteed the privilege until the year 1808. If the framers of the Constitution contemplated extending slavery, can we suppose they would have limited this traffic to the period they did? or that they would have put any limit to it at all? Did they look upon slavery as a blessing to the African, to bring him here and teach him civilization and Christianity? No, sir, no! This prohibition, in its very phraseology, shows that they had, then, no fellowship with this traffic, and compromised by permitting such States, then existing, as desired to pursue it, to do so until 1808; and the inference is, that they thought, after that period, slavery would die out, from State to State, as it did in several of the States.

There is one more provision of the Constitution on which much is said.

In the fourth article and second section it is said:

"No person held to service or labor in one State under the laws thereof, escaping into another, shall, in consequence of any law or regulation therein, be discharged from such service or labor, but shall be delivered up on claim of the party to whom such service or labor may be due."

Mr. Chairman, whatever this may mean, I think no one can plead its provisions to justify the extension of slavery. This section contemplates, that the person, if he be a slave, or whatever he be, if he be held to service or labor, shall, when taken by proper authority, and identified in a proper manner, be delivered up—we reasonably suppose—to be taken back where the service or labor may be due; and whatever this section proves, it does not, in my opinion, give the least countenance to the extension of slavery; no, sir, not the least.

Now, sir, what is there in the Constitution to justify the extension of slavery? Representation and direct taxes may be apportioned, partially, by its provisions; the importations of "such persons" may be continued by the States that desire it until 1808; persons held to service or labor in one State, under the laws thereof, escaping into another, shall not be discharged from such service or labor, but shall be delivered up, upon proper authority, to be taken back to service where the labor may be due. The runaway does not carry slavery with him; the master, in pursuing him, does not carry slavery with him; he must go back where such service is legalized. I see nothing in all these provisions that favor the extension of slavery. But, sir, if we could read over the Constitution with the same feelings that, I believe, the framers of that instrument had, I doubt not

we should conclude, as I think they did, that slavery would disappear and fade away, under the genial influence of our free institutions.

Sir, it is a new doctrine that slavery is a blessing. Could you have found a man—perhaps one—but could you have found ten men, twenty-five years ago, who would have hazarded their reputation on such a declaration? I had, at that period, some intercourse with Southern gentlemen, and found them free to express a decided opinion that the institution was a curse to them; and I need not tell you who it was who said, "I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just."

But, sir, I must hasten to a conclusion: the sands of my brief hour are wasting. I have asked, is slavery of such high and holy origin as to give it sanction? Does it stand justified on the plea of humanity? Does it promote the best good of the country? Does it create the best state of society? Does it promote the peace and harmony of the country? Does it shed honor on the American name and character? What claim has it for extension under the Constitution? Sir, I have given some attention to these particulars, and trust I have shown that the system, and especially the extension of the system, must fall when tried by any of these considerations.

But, Mr. Chairman, let me return to the bill under consideration. California stands at our door for admission, every way qualified to come into the family of States. Her Constitution is here, her members are here, and what hinders? Is not one State a large enough subject, or of sufficient importance to engross our attention in one bill? Must we load down this younger sister with burdens too heavy to bear? Must we have a compound dose? Must we make her carry a load to break down her high and noble spirit? Must she, and must the spirit of Freedom in this House, pay, by any sacrifice in other territory, a price for her reception? I have long observed that no measure which would not stand on its own merits was worthy to be carried at all. Sir, let us take one measure at a time—let us finish one job at a time, and especially a measure of so much importance as the admission of a State into this Union.

Mr. Chairman, I do not question the motives of the honorable gentleman from Illinois, who has introduced a bill, embracing several important subjects. He declared, in his place, that he offered it as a peace-offering, and I doubt not his sincerity; but I very much doubt the propriety of the measure. And I will go further, and say, that beyond all question, in my mind, such a combination of subjects of such magnitude is improper. It will certainly embarrass, for a time at least, the admission of California, if it does not defeat it for a long period. What effect may we calculate this delay will have on the feelings of the citizens of California, on her high-minded Senators and Representatives, ready, here, to enter upon their public duties? Are not the interests of California suffering and bleeding for want of legislation? and such legislation as her own representatives are best able to explain? Are not our hardy sons there, and going there in multitudes? Does not every consideration of in-

terest and honor press upon us the necessity of immediate action in her behalf? Is it right, is it patriotic, to give her the cold shoulder, because there are other subjects of a national character about which we are not so well agreed? Must a man who has a clear title to his farm or his house—known to be so to all—be kept from the possession of it because his neighbor has trouble about his title or his boundaries? It is unjust.

I stand here, sir, the advocate of the immediate admission of California, alone; without any entangling alliances to distract her or to distract us. My vote is ready whenever the proposition is offered. She has prohibited slavery. I honor her for her wisdom. I rejoice in the triumph of freedom in her councils; and believe that under this banner she is destined to become a great and noble State. Perhaps—indeed it is almost certain—some of her cities are destined to become among the greatest marts of trade in the world. California is now a valuable customer to her sister States, (if we may call her a sister,) she is rising in importance every day. How long shall we trespass upon her patience or keep from her those privileges and honors to which she is so justly entitled?

I cannot say what she *may* do. I believe she is loyal in her feelings, and ardent in her attachment to this Union. Let us not quench, by delay, those patriotic and holy fires that now burn in her bosom, but let us hasten to extend to her the hand of fellowship, that, in mutual harmony of feeling and action, we may mingle our efforts for the common good of our country—our whole country.

Mr. Chairman, it has been common for some gentlemen to explain their position, and how they intend to vote, on the great questions relating to California and the Territories. I have already said that I desire to vote for California alone. In relation to the other Territories, it is my wish to give them Territorial Governments, in which the Ordinance of 1787, or the Wilmot Proviso, shall be incorporated; and it will be my purpose, in

accordance with the expressed will of the Legislature of the State I have the honor in part to represent, to vote, in all the stages of the business, in accordance with these principles, and against the extension of slavery in any manner or form.

I understand, Mr. Chairman, that the supporters of slavery intend to publish a paper in this city to vindicate the institution, and change the sentiment of the country, and perhaps of the world, on that subject. Sir, a philosopher once thought he could overturn the world with lever power: this power, like that of the press, will do wonders; but the lever must have a fulcrum, and the press must have some redeeming principles that belong to heaven or earth, before public opinion can be changed with regard to slavery, by its action. Talk of breaking down the spirit of freedom by a newspaper! The man would be wiser, who should take his bow and arrow, and, standing on the western steps of this Capitol, suppose he could, by a single shot, tunnel the Alleghany. He might be vain enough to suppose the passage was opened through the mountain, but he would find it, on examination, unbroken and untouched. And so will the bulwarks of freedom remain unbroken, notwithstanding all the efforts of such a press, or a hundred like it, in this city.

But, Mr. Chairman, I have said nothing about the dissolution of this Union. Should I be fined, or suffer any penalty, if I should omit to do so? I confess, sir, such a thought as the dissolution of this Union has not the faintest hold on my mind; and the responses that come up from those parts of the Union where I expected to hear the most of it, are so faint in support of the much-talked-of Nashville Convention, that I am led to believe, that the fire which produced the sparks and smoke, in weeks past, has nearly, if not quite, gone out. I say, for one, let it die. I have no wish to disturb its sleeping embers. The People must govern; they *will* govern; and in their hands the Union is safe.